



NEWS RELEASE

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BLM Schedules Listening Sessions in Albuquerque on March 20 to Gather Information About Split Estate Issues

Santa Fe, NM - As part of its efforts to implement the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Bureau of Land Management has announced a series of listening sessions across the West on issues surrounding development of Federally owned oil and natural gas resources that occur under privately owned surface lands.

The listening sessions for New Mexico have been scheduled in Albuquerque on March 20, 2006, at the Marriott Pyramid Hotel, Kokopelli Room, 5151 San Francisco Road, NE. The first session will start at 1:00 p.m., followed by an evening session starting at 7:00 p.m.

Representatives of the BLM will gather ideas and recommendations for implementing the split estate provisions in the Act. "Split estate" refers to privately owned lands underlain by Federally owned minerals. Congress directed BLM to review current policies and practices for managing split-estate situations in consultation with affected private landowners, the oil and gas industry, and other interested parties.

"The BLM wants to hear recommendations on updating its policies and procedures for managing Federal oil and natural gas resources in split estate areas," said New Mexico State Director Linda Rundell. "Our goal is to ensure reasonable access to the energy supplies that meet the Nation's growing needs while minimizing the impact on privately owned surface."

The Albuquerque listening session will begin with an overview of the split estate provisions of the Energy Policy Act and current split estate practices, policies, regulations, and laws that guide management of the Federal mineral estate. Participants who request to speak will then be provided a set amount of time to provide their recommendations.

Background information on split estate issues and preliminary drafts of a report to Congress are available on the BLM Split Estate website: www.blm.gov/bmp as are the times and locations of other listening sessions.

Those not able to attend one of the listening sessions may submit comments by e-mail to splitestate@blm.gov by April 1, 2006. The team writing the report to Congress will consider all comments and recommendations received by e-mail and at the listening sessions in preparing a final version.

The BLM manages 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate nationwide, including approximately 58 million acres where the surface is privately owned. In many cases, surface rights and mineral rights were severed under the terms of Federal homesteading laws, such as the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916.

Managing the Federal mineral estate, along with 261 million surface acres, gives the BLM a central role in implementing the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Acting as steward of numerous energy resources – coal, oil and gas, geothermal, hydropower, solar, wind, and biomass energy resources – is part of the agency's multiple-use mission to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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